BC3 golf wins with local talent

Article published September 22, 2012
By Sam Tallarico

BUTLER TWP — Bill Miller has had some very good Butler County Community College golf teams through the years — but hardly one like this.

While this year’s squad has been successful — 14-2 entering Friday’s match against CCAC Boyce — it has a different element. Every member is a Butler County resident.

“It just happened that this fall we had a local group,” Miller said. “We usually have someone from New Castle or West Middlesex or somewhere around there.

“We had a couple of guys we thought would be here who did play in high school, but decided not to come. Usually we get two or three guys who played in high school and a couple of guys who have the ability to play golf.

“This year, we were just lucky they were all local. You hope to build on that,” Miller added.

This year’s roster has four players from Butler in Tyler Friel, Joe Friel, Brady Roth and Bill Smith, two from Mars in Garrett Gabriel and Devin Harants, along with Matt Eshelman from Knoch and Karns City’s Tucker Preston.

Highlighting the team this season has been the play of Eshelman, Preston and Gabriel, the Pioneers’ top-three players.

Eshelman, a sophomore who played at Thiel College last year, and Preston, a freshmen who golfed for the Gremlins, have shot consistently in the high 70s to low 80s.

“They both have a pretty decent shot at getting (all-WPCC),” Miller said. “The top-10 players through the year with the best scoring average get that, then there’s a Top 10 all-tournament team, so theoretically, you could make both.

“Both have played pretty well. Matt has a little bit more experience while Tucker’s a true freshman. He played golf and basketball. He’s very athletic. He’s got that drive,” Miller added.

“I’m just trying to shoot as low a score as I can,” Eshelman said. “As far as us having a good year, we have three or four kids who can score well and have three, four, five kids who could qualify for the state championship (Oct. 7-9 at Penn National Golf Club).”
Said Preston: “It’s definitely a lot different format, but it’s still the same game. You’re just playing against different people.”

Gabriel was the Planets’ goalkeeper in soccer last fall, so he did not play for the Planets’ golf team.

“Garrett’s been a surprise,” Miller said. “He didn’t play formally in high school. He’s averaging about an 83. We didn’t expect his score to be like that.”

That may have even caught Gabriel off-guard.

“I thought I could do good, but since I’ve played more with the team, it’s like soccer, you get used to the game and you improve,” Gabriel said.

“It’s definitely different. With soccer, you know where everyone is on the field. In golf, you need to focus on what you need to do and play your best. It’s really you against the course, not you against someone else.”

The Pioneers have gotten off to a great start because they’ve been able to bring at least a team of four to each match, except the two matches they dropped last week because only three golfers could make it.

“You have an 18-hole round and most of them are at noon, so you might have to leave by 9 or 10 in the morning,” Miller explained. “It’s hard to get everyone because of tests or classes.”

BC3 will have four more matches before gearing up for the WPCC Championship, which will be held Sept. 28-29 at The Links in Spring Church.

Miller is optimistic his team is strong enough to contend.

“I think the team for us to beat is CCAC North. They have three pretty good golfers,” Miller said. “We beat them earlier in the year, but they didn’t have four guys.

“But, when it gets to the tournament, everyone brings their team. We’ll bring our team.”